

IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653
mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

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HUNT SAFELY THIS TURKEY SEASON

DES MOINES – The estimated 60,000 turkey hunters who will take to the woods for the 2003 spring turkey hunting season should remember two things – be sure to have permission to hunt on the land and hunt safely.

“Don’t assume that if you had permission to hunt a piece of land last year, that permission is granted this year,” said Rod Slings, recreational safety program supervisor for the DNR. “Talk to the landowner to find out if anyone else will be on the property and if they are restricted to any particular area.”

During the 2002 spring turkey season, there was one shooting incident.

“Last year we nearly met our goal of having no hunting incidents,” he said. “I am hopeful that this year we will have an incident free year.”

Slings said over the years of investigating shooting incidents during spring turkey season, the shooter always says they saw a turkey – not that they saw the turkey’s beard.

“You have to make sure to identify the beard on the turkey. Don’t shoot at colors. Don’t shoot at movement,” he said.

Hunters should keep in mind turkey season is about the same time as mushroom season. For safety reasons, mushroom hunters are encouraged to wear blaze orange in the woods.

Slings said there are a number of things hunters need to think about before going into the woods. File a hunting plan someplace so people know what you're doing and where you are.

"Leave a note on the refrigerator saying this is when I will be home and this is exactly where I will be – plan your hunt and hunt your plan," he said.

Be considerate to farmers. "Hunters should remember that farmers will be doing field work, so they should not block any field access points," Slings said.

Safety Tips

- Avoid wearing patriotic colors – red, white and blue – because they are predominant colors in turkeys. This goes for mushroom hunters as well.
- Hunters should wear blaze orange when coming and going to their hunting spot so they may be seen, and should use a blaze orange game bag to carry out their bird.
- Be sure of the target. "Hunters have to identify the beard on the turkey before the shot and know what is behind the target," Slings said.
- Using a gobble call can be dangerous because someone may be stalking the gobble.
- Never allow your decoys to be visible while going to or coming from the field. Never carry an identifiable decoy any distance.
- Should you see another hunter – especially if he/she is close to your "line of sight" – call out to them in a loud, clear voice. Their presence has already compromised your location and a "soft" call may only confuse them, rather than alerting them to your presence.
- If you are calling over decoys, then elect to move to a new location, check carefully to ensure that no one is stalking your decoys. Check before leaving your "stand" tree. Should you see someone in the area, call out to him or her in a clear, loud voice.
- Be sure that accessories you carry that are red, white or blue, like diaphragm calls, box call chalk, candy wrappers, water bottles, apples, or cigarette packs, are not visible to other hunters.

Turkey hunters are required to have a valid hunting license, habitat fee and a turkey license. A hunter may assist another hunter in calling the birds as long as they are licensed. Check the 2003 Iowa Spring Turkey Hunting Guide for additional information.

The spring turkey seasons are: Season 1, April 14 – 17; Season 2, April 18 – 22 (residents only); Season 3, April 23 – 29; Season 4, April 30 – May 18.

For more information, contact Slings at 515-281-8652 or a local conservation or recreational safety officer.

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CAMPING CONTEST TO INCLUDE ALL STATE PARKS IN 2003

DES MOINES – The Iowa DNR is offering the Explore Iowa Parks program again this year that rewards campers for camping at Iowa State Parks. Last year, the program targeted the 18 of the lesser-used state parks. This year, the program will include all 53 state parks, recreation areas and forests.

"Under Explore Iowa Parks, campers can qualify at three levels for prizes that reward them for camping at five, seven or 10 different state parks. We decided to include all parks this year as a way to encourage people to plan for both extended camping trips as well as weekend getaways," says Sherry Arntzen, DNR.

The program kicks-off May 2 in conjunction with free camping weekend and runs through Oct. 31. Brochures explaining the Explore Iowa Parks program will be available at state parks beginning May 2. Arntzen said to keep costs down, the brochures will not be mailed, but the brochure, rules, entry form and prize information can also be found at www.exploreiowaparks.com.

She said campers must keep their camping registration originals and mail them to DNR by Oct. 31. Campers who mail in registrations for five of the participating parks get a free subscription to the Iowa Conservationist, the colorful magazine published bi-monthly by DNR. Those who camp at seven parks get the subscription and a special parks T-shirt. Campers who make 10 different parks get those two prizes, plus a chance in a drawing for one year of free camping in Iowa State Parks, Recreation Areas and Forests; a Trek mountain bike or a \$100 gift certificate from Cabela's.

The mountain bike, valued at \$240, was donated by Bike World located in Des Moines, West Des Moines and Ames. The \$100 gift certificate was donated by Cabela's in Prairie du Chien, Wisc.

The Explore Iowa Parks program is open to residents and nonresidents. For more information contact the DNR at 515/242-6233 or go to www.exploreiowaparks.com.

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FIRST ANNUAL RIVER CLEANUP AND WATER QUALITY EXPEDITION PLANNED FOR JUNE Celebrate National Rivers Month

DES MOINES – Imagine if you will, canoeing through limestone bluffs on a beautiful spring day – sunny skies, calm water, and breathtaking scenery. The sound of paddles dipping gently and methodically into the cool waters, the mysterious but soothing songs of animal bachelors advertising their availability and willingness to secure an evening companion, and the rustling leaves dancing playfully in the breeze, all coming together in Mother Nature's delicate orchestra. The ambiance generates a renewed appreciation and admiration of Iowa's spectacular natural resources – resources that are often taken for granted and selfishly exploited.

“You haven’t really seen Iowa until you’ve spent time on our rivers,” says Iowa DNR Director Jeffrey Vonk.

Iowans are invited to join Director Vonk and others participating in Project A.W.A.R.E. (A Watershed Awareness and River Expedition) and spend time on one of Iowa’s most scenic rivers, the Maquoketa. This first-of-its-kind journey will take place from Sunday, June 1, to Sunday, June 8. Starting at Backbone State Park and finishing near its confluence with the Mississippi River, the trip will span nearly 100 miles of the Maquoketa River, focusing on watersheds and how they affect water quality. Participants on the trip are encouraged to pick up streamside trash, attend nightly evening programs, and have the time of their lives! Evening programs range in topics from wildlife, geology, and water quality, to Iowa Poet Laureate Michael Carey’s river literacy program.

Volunteers are invited to join the Department of Natural Resources’ IOWATER and Keepers of the Land Volunteer Programs for an afternoon, a day, or for the entire week. Although there is no registration fee, registration is required, camping will be provided, and meals will be available for approximately \$15 per day.

For details and registration forms visit AWARE online at: <http://www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/aware.html>; or contact Tom O’Neill, Keepers of the Land Program Administrator, at 515-281-4539 or Tom.ONeill@dnr.state.ia.us

(Note to news media: Your organization is invited and encouraged to participate in any or all of portions of this event. Please contact Tom O’Neill at the phone number or e-mail address above if you will need access to any accommodations such as shuttle service, phone lines or Internet access.)

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WORDS OF THE WARDEN

By Dave Elledge

Iowa DNR state conservation officer

Spring is approaching and as it does, the local nimrods will be taking to the field to try to outsmart the wild turkey. It should not be as difficult as it is because the human brain is about two-thirds the size of a honey dew melon and the turkey’s brain is roughly the size of a pea.

It’s tough though, living in the wild and scratching out a living day by day is the business the turkey is in, and is good at. Turkeys must avoid all the predators hunting them from the ground and air. They must also make a living where habitat reduction threatens them as well as a host of other things. Still they survive.

One of the things that makes the spring hunt for the tom turkey so difficult, is that the hunter is trying to reverse nature. Our hunter calls and calls, trying his or her best to sound like the hottest

date in town, to get the tom turkey to come strutting in close enough for a shot. But in the real world, toms do not go to hens – hens go to toms. He gobbles, struts, spits and drums. This is turkey talk for something like beating his chest, yelling like tarzan, and lifting something really heavy when all the girls are looking. In the turkey world, it's the girls who come trotting in.

Another thing that makes this spring hunt tough for we with the big brain – turkeys can see well. Very, very well. A person dressed in clothing designed to blend in with the forest often forgets the soles of his or her shoes, or that their watch may be showing, or those glasses may be giving off the slightest reflection. Or, tom may even see the rise and fall of the hunter's chest as he or she breathes. When day to day survival is your business, like the turkey, lots of things are noticed.

Sometimes, hunters team up to take a prize turkey. Now we have two or three of those big brains against one brain the size of a pea. Yes, the turkey still wins a lot of the time. I have always believed that spring turkey hunting is basic infantry ambush tactics put to another use.

So how do hunters get these prize turkeys? Well, I read a book on trapping once when I was a boy. I was really in to mink and fox trapping back then. I do not recall the author, but do recall a passage I have never forgotten. It went like this – “remove all suspicion, and lay great temptation.”

Turkey hunting is a great sport. It brings one closer to nature and helps cultivate patience. To those taking the field this spring I would ask that you be sure of your target and what is beyond before taking the shot. Please do not take shots that are unsafe or unethical. Once the shot leaves the gun or bow, you cannot take it back. Don't let peer pressure get the best of you. Always think safety and ethics first. The image of our sport is always on the line.

Thanks for reading and I'll see you in the field.

###

SPRING CLEANING

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The final dose (hopefully) of snow last week makes a pretty good backdrop as we shift gears from winter to spring. It's a good chance to clear out a few outdoor details before heading into warm weather, too.

Free Camping. It might be soggy set up today, but Iowa campers are coming out of hibernation. To help shake off the cobwebs, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is offering free camping at 53 state parks, May 2, 3 and 4. “We encourage Iowans to get outside and experience the opportunities Iowa's state parks offer,” suggests Kevin Szcodronski, interim parks bureau chief. “We hope the free weekend entices more Iowans out on a regular basis.”

Many state park campgrounds are full during warm weather holiday weekends, but Szcodronski reminds you that mid-week camping is almost always available. Non-holiday weekends are frequently open, too. For information about the weekend, including which parks are 'free', click your way to: www.exploreiowaparks.com.

Boat Stickers. The end of April means Iowa boat owners must renew registrations. The new blue and white stickers feature an '05' expiration reminder and are available at the county recorder's office. Non-motor, non-sail stickers are \$6. Others are priced, according to the length of the craft.

2004 Food Plots. This winter was mild, but food plots are still a solid bet for wildlife survival year after year. Now is the time to begin planning *next* winter's food plots, for pheasants and a variety of wildlife species.

Though starvation rarely causes winter mortality, pheasants still rely on strategically placed plantings of sorghum, corn and other grains. "They provide winter habitat as well as food," emphasizes Todd Bogenschutz, wildlife research biologist for the DNR. "If properly designed and large enough, a food plot as habitat can be more beneficial than the food itself. Food plots also provide pheasants easier access to a meal; limiting exposure to predators and maximizing energy reserves." Most county Pheasants Forever chapter, and in some cases the DNR, can provide cost-share assistance for landowners.

Turkey Woods Safety. Spring turkey season is, arguably, Iowa's most exciting hunting pastime. It has the potential to be dangerous, though, if important safety tips are ignored.

Specifically; Avoid red or white clothing; the colors primarily associated with a puffed up gobbler's head...the primary target of spring hunters. When working a bird, always sit against a tree as wide as your shoulders. Try to set up with a clear, 180 degree view. Although they are extremely effective in the right situations, most safety instructors advise hunters NOT to use calls that imitate the sound of a gobbler. Gobbler shakers are just as likely to draw other hunters as they are to attract toms. If another hunter approaches through the woods - NEVER wave. Instead remain motionless, and alert the hunter with your voice. "Stop" or "Don't shoot" are good commands.

Countdown to Turkey Season

Getting the Edge, With Preseason Scouting

In a perfect world, I would be in the woods before dawn, listening for roosting toms to gobble, just before fly-down. All the clucks, puts, purrs and alluring sounds of the big game birds would indicate how standoffish the hens might still be.

In a perfect world, though, the temperature wouldn't head into the deep freeze. There would be no April snowstorm, scrambling turkey instincts and patterns. I would enjoy entire days for those leisurely sojourns; invisible as the turkeys talked.

As it is, I'll be lucky to catch some 'night before' roosting and rely on a midday walk-through that I squeezed in last month.

“Preseason scouting gives you an edge as to where the birds are; where they roost and what areas they tend to use. That way, you won’t blunder in on them, scaring them off the roost opening morning,” explains Chuck Steffen, wildlife biologist for the Department of Natural Resources in turkey-heavy south central Iowa. In the next breath, though, Steffen admits that he shares the same problem many turkey hunters face; ‘too little time, too much to do’.

A predawn scouting trip, though, is valuable. It helps as you to pick your way through the dark on opening day. I like to go near, but not into the 80 acre Delaware County timber I always hunt. I walk across a quarter mile of corn stubble and listen. Having hunted deer and turkeys there every year, I can almost pin down which limestone outcrop, which stand of trees, is harboring the pre-dawn rabble-rousers

But how close do you get, when scouting or when tiptoeing in, during the season?

Steffen does slip out at sunset, to ‘put the turkeys to bed’, if hunting the next morning. “I’ll sit and listen to them gobble as they fly up to roost,” he says. “Then the next morning, it depends on how dry things are underfoot and how much ‘leaf out’ there is. I try not to get closer than 100 to 150 yards. It depends on the terrain, too. Don’t try to get right up on them, though.”

Most turkey hunting experts emphasize, too, that you should scout silently. Calling a turkey might give you some practice. However, any nearby tom quickly learns there is no hen there. That makes him even more liable to ignore you, when you want him walking into the sights of your 12-gauge.

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SPECIAL SNOW GOOSE SEASON ENDS APRIL 15

DES MOINES – The special spring conservation order snow goose season will close on April 15. The special spring season, set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is used to reduce the number of snow geese migrating to arctic tundra. The population of snow geese has grown to the point where the geese are damaging their fragile Canadian breeding grounds.

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VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT FOR STATEWIDE PRAIRIE RESCUE

DES MOINES - A coalition of conservation groups is holding a statewide spring prairie rescue. Volunteers are needed to help "rescue" prairie sites around the state.

This year’s partners include: Audubon Iowa, The Nature Conservancy, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, AmeriCorps, the Loess Hills Preservation Society, Iowa Prairie Network and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Prairie is an important part of Iowa's natural heritage. Prairie once covered nearly 80 percent of the state, but 99.9 percent of Iowa's original prairie is now gone. Though Iowa's prairies were once self-sustaining, many remaining prairies require human intervention to stay healthy.

Prairie rescue volunteers will clear invading brush and trees from Iowa's prairie remnants and conduct other protection activities. On-site experts will provide guidance and prairie education. This is a chance for adults and kids to learn and help.

Most events are from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., but volunteers are welcome to sign up for shorter periods. Participants should dress in comfortable *work clothes*, and if possible, bring *work gloves* and cutting tools like *bow saws* or *loppers*. Check with the site's contact person for specific details.

For more information or to sign up, see the Prairie Rescue website at www.inhf.org/prairierescue2003.htm or click the link on the Iowa DNR website. Then get in touch with the contact person for the appropriate site.

For more information, contact Michael Pecenka at 515-281-6271, or Kristin Kuennen at 515-281-3134.

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DNR SPRING SALE SET FOR MAY 10

DES MOINES – The Iowa DNR will hold a spring auction Saturday, May 10, at the Cattle Barn on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. The gates open at 8 a.m. and the auction will begin around 9 a.m. Items up for auction include firearms, boats, outboard motors, chainsaws, mowers, trailers, farm and office equipment and more. The items are sold “as is” with no guarantee or warranty.

The public may view the items for sale from May 7 to 9, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Any person interested in purchasing a firearm at the auction must have either a valid Iowa permit to acquire pistols or revolvers, a federal firearms license, or a professional or non-professional permit to carry concealed weapons. The Iowa permit to acquire can be obtained from a sheriff's office. Allow two to three weeks to receive the permit.

Payment must be made on auction day. All sales are final. Firearms must be removed from the site within one half hour after the sale of the firearm is completed. All other items must be removed from the sale site after full payment is made.

Sales taxes will be collected. Boats, snowmobiles, trailers and vehicles will pay taxes to the proper county office when registering those items.

The Iowa DNR reserves the right to reject any bids and withdraw any item from the sale at any time. To receive a copy of the sale bill, send a self addressed stamped envelop to Surplus Sale, Iowa DNR, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50319.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of April 15, 2003

www.iowadnr.com

For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Northeast

Mississippi River: The Mighty Mississippi is clear and extremely low for this time of year. Above Dam 10 at Guttenberg, the water level is at 611 feet and the tailwater below the dam is at 605.7 feet. Walleye and sauger fishing has slowed due to the spawn, but some may be picked up on three-way rigs tipped with a minnow in the tailwaters of **Dams 9 and 10**. In **Pools 9-11**, rock bass have started biting on bits of night crawlers. Catfishing is also picking up using cut shad or night crawlers fished on the bottom. Walleye and saugers are being caught in the tailwater of **Dam 11** at Dubuque using jigs and jigs tipped with a minnow. Fishing in the late evening hours is best. The walleye and sauger spawn is on in **Pool 13**, but tailwater fishing can still be good. Bluegill fishing is good in Middle Sabula Lake at the north landing using wax worms. Walleye and sauger fishing is spotty in **Pool 14** using jigs or jig and minnows. Crappie fishing in the Rock Creek area is good on minnows. Some channel catfish are being taken with night crawlers at the mouth of the Wapsipinicon River.

The interior rivers are also running low and clear at this time.

Turkey River (Fayette and Clayton): Smallmouth bass and walleye are starting to bite on jigs tipped with a night crawler or minnow.

Cedar River (Mitchell and Floyd): Northern pike, smallmouth bass and walleye are good on jigs tipped with live minnows. Channel catfish are biting on dead minnows in the stretch in Black Hawk County.

Shell Rock (Butler, Bremer and Black Hawk) and **Wapsipinicon Rivers** (Buchanan): Channel catfish are biting on dead minnows.

Upper Iowa River (Howard and Winneshiek): Smallmouth bass fishing is good on jigs tipped with dark-colored twister tails. Walleye are good on jigs tipped with live bait.

South Prairie Lake (Black Hawk): Bluegill fishing is good using wax worms on warmer days.

Casey Lake (Tama): Anglers are catching crappies and bluegills on jigs tipped with wax worms.

Saints Lake (Bremer): Channel catfish are good on dead minnows.

Trout streams are clear and the flow is low. Trout fishing is excellent with many mayfly and other insect hatches occurring. For current trout stocking information, contact the **Big Spring**

Hatchery at 563-245-1699, **Decorah Hatchery** at 563-382-3315 or **Manchester Hatchery** at 563-927-5736. You can also view the trout stocking calendar on-line by going to www.iowadnr.com, clicking on **Fish and Fishing** and then choosing **Favorite Pages**.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Anglers are catching some yellow perch from shore. Crappies and bluegills are being caught at the Grade and Templar Park. Sorting is required to keep a mess of eaters. Use small jigs tipped with a wax worm suspended below a bobber. Bullheads are biting at the Grade. The best fishing is on warm sunny days. Smallmouth bass fishing is excellent. Fish the rocky areas on calm, sunny days.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Anglers are catching crappies at the trestle and at Triboji using a crappie jig suspended 6 to 10-inches below a slip bobber. Some largemouth bass are being caught along shallow areas of the lake using rattle traps and spinner baits.

Silver Lake (Dickinson): Shore anglers are catching walleyes after dark casting a twister tail or jigging a minnow. There are good numbers of 14 to 17-inch walleyes available.

Lost Island Lake (Clay and Palo Alto): Anglers are catching a few walleyes. Traditionally, the west side produces the best walleye action. There is also a good opportunity to catch bucketsful of nice sized bullheads.

Five Island (Palo Alto): Most walleyes are in the 16 to 19 inch range. Public access is available on the south side of the lake, however, ample opportunities exist north of the bridge.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Walleye fishing is good. Fish from a boat or waders is working the best. Fish the shallow, rocky shorelines with a jig and minnow. Sunset has been the best time for walleye. Yellow bass fishing is excellent. Fish the west end of the lake with a small jig tipped with minnows or cut bait. Bullhead fishing is excellent. Use night crawlers on the windy shorelines. Bullheads are running 9 to 11 inches.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Bullheads are being caught all over the lake.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Crappies and bluegills are biting along shallow areas and lagoons on jigs and minnows.

Orient (Adair): Fishing is good for 7-inch crappies on jigs and minnows.

Three Mile (Union): Anglers are catching walleyes along the face of the dam. Channel catfish are being caught at north end on cut shad. Fishing is good for crappies over deepwater brush piles. Largemouth bass fishing is good.

Twelve Mile (Union): Channel catfish are good at north end using cut shad. Walleye fishing is good along the face of the dam. Crappies are good in the trees north of the main boat ramp. Anglers are catching lots of yellow bass. Largemouth bass fishing is also good.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies are being caught in deeper water around brush piles and off the points using minnows. Catfish fishing has been good toward the upper end of the lake using shad and worms.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Bluegills and crappies have been biting on small jigs. Fishing along the dam has been the most productive area.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Bluegills are still biting on ice fishing jigs tipped with wax worms fished off the structure. Largemouth bass are really starting to hit strong using rubber worms.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Bluegills and crappies have been biting on small jigs and spinners. Largemouth bass have started to hit on a variety of baits.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): Fishing has been fair below the Macbride Dam for crappies using jigs and minnows. A few walleye are also being caught below Macbride Dam. Catfishing has been good in shallow bays on dead shad and shad guts. Catfish will begin migrating to deeper water as the water warms.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Crappie fishing has been fair near the causeway and off of the brush. An occasional walleye is also being caught off the Macbride Dam

Iowa River (Johnson): Walleye and crappie fishing has been fair below Coralville Dam.

Farm Ponds: Bluegill and bass fishing has been fair.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

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